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Message Text

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44
ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-13 AID-20 EUR-25 NIC-01

SIL-01 LAB-06 DRC-01 /179 W
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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9573
INFO USCINCSO
AMCONSUL CALI UNN
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CINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CO
SUBJ: UNION OF NATIONAL OPPOSITION (UNO) NOMINATES HERNANDO ECHEVERRI MEJIA FOR PRESIDENCY

1. ON SEPTEMBER 22, THE UNION OF NATIONAL OPPOSITION (UNO) CONVENED AT THE NATIONAL CAPITOL AND NOMINATED HERNANDO ECHEVARRI MEJIA AS ITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. THE UNO, A CONGLOMERATION OF THE NUMERICALLY INSIGNIFICANT COLOMBIAN LEFTIST PARTIES, CONSISTS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY, THE BROAD COLOMBIAN MOVEMENT (MAC) AND THE MOVEMENT OF REVOLUTIONARY INDUSTRIAL WORKERS (MOIR).

2. THE ORATORS AT THE CONVENTION MADE REPEATED REFERENCE TO THE LATE SALVADOR ALLENDE, AND TO HIS OUSTER AND DEATH AT THE HANDS OF WHAT THEY DESCRIBED AS A FASCIST GOLPE. IN ADDITION TO THE REFERENCES TO CHILEAN EVENTS, UNO SPEAKERS EMPLOYED SOME OF THE MORE TRADITIONAL RHETORIC OF THE FAR LEFT, WITH ALLUSIONS TO "YANKEE IMPERIALISM", "RULING OLIGARCHS" AND "ARMED REPRESSION".
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AN INTERESTING ASPECT OF THE CONVENTION WAS THE BALLOTING SYSTEM

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WHICH, DESPITE THE PRESENCE OF 1500 PARTICIPANTS IN THE CHAMBER, ALLOTED VOTES TO ONLY 240 OF THEM. THE NARROW VOTING BASE FURTHER REMOVED ANY ELEMENT OF SUSPENSE FROM THE RATHER PREDICTABLE PROCEEDINGS. THE CONVENTION HAD HARSH WORDS FOR THE TWO TRADITIONAL PARTIES, AND IN THE CASE OF ANAPO, EXPRESSED DISTASTE FOR GENERAL ROJAS ("AUTHORITARIAN AND MONARCHICAL") AS WELL AS FOR THE THIRD PARTY'S PROGRAMS AND LEADERS. CANDIDATE ECHEVERRI SAID THAT COOPERATION WITH ANAPO MIGHT BE POSSIBLE ON THE POPULAR LEVEL, BUT NEVER UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE THIRD PARTY. HE THUS LEFT THE DOOR VERY SLIGHTLY OPEN IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THAT ANAPO SHOULD BE WILLING TO REACH ACCOMODATION WITH THE UNO GROUP.

3. THE CANDIDATE, A PHYSICIAN BY PROFESSION, HAS LONG BEEN ACTIVE IN LEFTIST CAUSES AND WAS ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF MAC. IN 1970 ECHEVERRI WON ELECTION TO THE SENATE FROM ANTIOQUIA, RUNNING AS AN ANAPO LIBERAL. HE LEFT THE PARTY IN AUGUST, 1972 AFTER ANAPO'S POOR SHOWING IN THE APRIL 1972 ELECTIONS. ONE OF HIS FORMER ANAPO ASSOCIATES DESCRIBED ECHEVERRI AS A LEFTIST, ALTHOUGH NOT A RADICAL. HE IS INDEPENDENTLY WEALTHY AND HIS ABILITY TO FINANCE A CAMPAIGN FROM HIS OWN POCKET WAS PROBABLY A MAJOR FACTOR IN THE DECISION OF THE COMMUNISTS AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE UNO TO GO ALONG WITH HIS CANDIDACY.

4. THE ELECTORAL OUTLOOK FOR ECHEVERRI AND UNO IN GENERAL IS BLEAK. THE LEFT HAS TRADITIONALLY HAD SCANT APPEAL TO THE COLOMBIAN ELECTORATE, AS WAS DEMONSTRATED DURING THE 1972 ELECTIONS WHEN 24 OUT OF EVERY 25 COLOMBIAN VOTERS CAST THEIR BALLOTS FOR ONE OF THE TWO TRADITIONAL PARTIES OR FOR ANAPO.
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